

Sacred Encounters

Long before white men invaded the West, a chief of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe foretold that men wearing black robes would arrive, bringing both spiritual power and teaching to the people. The chief died before the "Black-robes" ever came but oral tradition perpetuated his prophecy.



Thus begins the spiritual dance that entwined Jesuit missionaries, who arrived from the East in 1842, with the Coeur d'Alene Indians who had maintained control over their Tribal lands for centuries. It's a complicated story about the dialogue between two cultures and two spiritual identities, interwoven with courage, heartache, commitment and confrontation.

The story of this cultural transformation was recently told in a haunting exhibition entitled *Sacred Encounters*. The exhibition has completed a national tour but this vital story still needs telling. Together, we will tell it.





The Traveling Exhibition

The encounter between missionary and Indian sparked a confrontation and dialogue between two sacred worlds. The collision of European and indigenous beliefs brought about wrenching changes, creating entirely new ways of life for native and newcomer alike. *Sacred Encounters* tells one story of the most intimate aspect of the contact between European and Indian set in motion by the invasion of the Americas.

The exhibition was conceived and directed by Professor Jacqueline Peterson of Washington State University. It grew out of an amazing discovery of long hidden maps, drawings and artifacts from the 1840s and 1850s associated with Father Pierre Jean De Smet and the early Jesuit missions to the Indian Northwest. For its seven-city tour, the exhibition ultimately assembled objects from more than fifty museum, archival and private collections in the United States, Canada and Belgium. The majority of these rare objects had never been seen by the public.

Sacred Encounters reached one-half million visitors on a three-year tour that encompassed premier museums in Kansas City, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Portland, Bozeman, Montana and Vancouver, British Columbia, closing with Tacoma, Washington on February 28, 1997.

The Artifacts

Most of the artifacts used in the traveling *Sacred Encounters* exhibit, such as those depicted in this publication, were loaned for that purpose by museums and private collectors. For the permanent collection the exhibit will use a combination of loaned and donated original artifacts as well as high quality reproductions. (Front Cover: Flat Beaded Bag, Plateau [Coeur d'Alene], ca. 1900, Cheney Cowles Museum, Spokane, Washington. Back cover: Cradleboard, Plateau, late 19th century, McCord Museum of Canadian History, Montreal. Interior background: Sacred Heart Mission among the Coeur d'Alene, Pierre-Jean De Smet, ca. 1859-60, De Smetiana Collection, Jesuit Missouri Province Archives, St. Louis. Margin design: From headstall strips, Plains or Plateau, collected by Pierre-Jean De Smet, 1859, Private Collection, Belgium.)

The Opportunity

Today, *Sacred Encounters* sits in storage, a compelling history of culture and religion trapped in boxes and crates, awaiting a permanent location for a story that's bigger than one tribe and one band of Jesuit missionaries.

Now an opportunity exists to change all that. Recognizing the exhibit's quality and historical significance for an entire region, Idaho Parks & Recreation designated Old Mission State Park as the permanent site for *Sacred Encounters*. It's the perfect location for many reasons. This state park is the actual setting for much of the exhibit. It contains the original *Mission of the Sacred Heart*, the oldest standing building in all of Idaho and an architectural wonder built in 1853 from hand-hewn logs, mud, willow branches and hand-planed pillars.

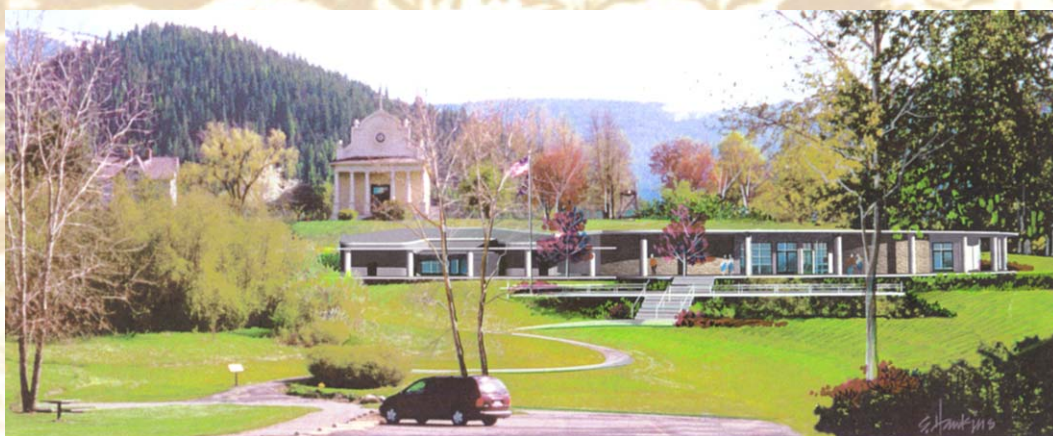
The 18-acre Old Mission State Park is enhanced by a visitor's center that provides a historical overview of the mission and its role in the lives of Indians and the Jesuit missionaries who served them. Likewise, a self-guided audio tour of the grounds combines sight and sound to provide an experiential tour. Most importantly, the Old Mission still functions as a place of worship and the site of an annual Tribal pilgrimage that hosts the Bishop of Idaho and Tribal ceremonies attended by some 2,000 people.

Placing *Sacred Encounters* here holds other benefits as well: it will increase the number of

visitors to Old Mission State Park which currently tops 90,000 visitors annually including 4,000 school children; it will promote economic development within the struggling Silver Valley; and it will celebrate the proud cultural heritage of all Native Americans.

The Capital Development Program

The Association for Sacred Encounters, a non-profit formed in 1998, is moving forward with a capital campaign to expand facilities at Old Mission State Park and permanently place *Sacred Encounters* there. Project components include 5,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space, an educational wing with auditorium plus a conservation lab and offices. Partners include Idaho Parks & Recreation, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and the Diocese of Boise, all of whom have contributed significant gifts of cash and in-kind services.



Conceptual drawing of the completed facility, projected cost: \$1,831,250.

The Story Needs to be Told

Ultimately, *Sacred Encounters* demonstrates how the Coeur d'Alene Tribe used the church as the means to assimilate into an encroaching Anglo culture. It's a story that extends from this Tribe to many others throughout the West.

We would appreciate your help as we endeavor to keep this piece of history alive. Your tax-deductible gift or pledge, payable over a three to five-year period, will ensure cultural and historical preservation, support diversity, and promote an increase in visitors to the Silver Valley. Gifts of securities, real estate, or life insurance are also gratefully accepted to fulfill any pledge made. There are other ways that you can share in the vision that is *Sacred Encounters*:

Naming Opportunities

There are three named gift opportunities, key construction components for which the benefactor will be named:

Exhibit Wing - exhibit space for <i>Sacred Encounters</i>	\$500,000
Educational Wing - auditorium, conference room, offices	\$155,000
Conservation Lab & Office	\$125,000





The Location

Old Mission State Park, which is open year round, is located just off Interstate 90, one-half hour east of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Its convenient location and important historical role make it an ideal site for a secure, accessible home for *Sacred Encounters*. Added park features include several picnic areas and a boat launch into the Coeur d'Alene River as well as ample parking and ADA accessibility.

The Committee

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